

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal  
CONDUCTED BY  
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 650. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1881.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## THE QUESTION OF CAIN.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

### CHAPTER X. WITH THE PRINCE.

THERE was an unusual gravity about the looks and demeanour of the master of the house when Helen saw him at breakfast next day. She had not seen either him or his wife in the interval, for they had dined out; and she met him with the resolution she had taken unchanged. Her intention had been to write to him, for she did not believe herself capable of saying what she wanted to say; but the change in his look and manner made her feel that something was coming, and she hastily resolved to speak if the opportunity offered. The meal was served according to the English custom, and during its course Helen had an uneasy sense that there was something in her companion's mind as unusual as the purpose that was in her own. He waited, however, until she was about to leave the room, according to custom, and then he asked her to remain and listen to what he had to say to her. She resumed her seat, turned very pale, and nervously fingered a fork, but she said never a word. Mr. Townley Gore had seldom faced any task so unpleasant to him as the present. He deserved no little credit, all things considered, for undertaking it.

"I am afraid," he said, "you were annoyed yesterday by my wife's refusal to let you visit your friend?"

He paused, but Helen made no reply and no sign.

"I thought she might have explained her meaning and given her reasons more fully, and so I have undertaken to do so for her, as she dislikes anything like contro-

versy, and her wishes on a point of the kind must be final. Of course you feel that?"

"I suppose so. I don't want to go against them," said Helen in a trembling voice.

"That's right."

Mr. Townley Gore felt ever so much more comfortable. This tiresome girl, with her impossible friendships, had nothing of the rebel about her at any rate.

"You must not take her decision for a personal unkindness; you do not understand things of this kind, and what she meant was that a school-friendship with a person in a class of society so inferior to your own, could not possibly last beyond your school-days. That I am sure the young person you mentioned would thoroughly understand. She would neither expect that you would visit her nor blame you for the impossibility. You may be sure if this Miss—Miss—"

"Jane Merrick."

"Miss Jane Merrick knows, as I presume she does, that my wife is one of her aunt's customers, she will be perfectly prepared to see or hear nothing of you."

"She does not know I am in Paris."

"So much the better; that makes it all right. She never need know it, and we may dismiss the subject." His tone was quite airy. This was getting through his task very easily. "I have only to give my wife an assurance on your part that you will strictly attend to her wishes." He took up that morning's "Figaro" as a signal that she was free to leave the room, but Helen rose from her place opposite, and going up to him, laid a detaining touch upon his arm.

"Stay," she said; "let me speak to you. I too have something to say."

He looked up at her flushed and eager face, at the large grey eyes full of purpose and feeling, at the slender upright figure, and the hands now linked together, an action which brought her father back to the memory of his old companion through all the intervening years with a strange distinctness; and a curious sensation, one to which he was utterly unaccustomed—the sensation of a sharp and serious misgiving, passed over him.

"I don't know how to tell you," she went on, "without seeming to be what I am not—ungrateful for your kindness and unworthy of it; but I must. I wish to go away. Pray, pray let me go, without trouble, without blame to anyone."

Mr. Townley Gore stared at her in profound amazement, and pushed back his chair, as if for the purpose of getting a better look at her.

"Let you go! Go where? What for? What do you mean?"

"Let me go away altogether. I am not happy here, and I am doing nothing. I am no use, no pleasure, no comfort to anyone. I want to go away. I know that you are very good to me, and I am sure I am to blame; but indeed, indeed I cannot live on here."

His good-looking face darkened, and he muttered something unpleasant between his teeth, as Helen put her hands before her face and sobbed. He had known that his scheme was not answering, but he had not suspected its failure to be so bad as this.

"What is the matter?" he asked sternly; "does anyone ill-treat you? Do you want for anything?"

He glanced at her dress; it was simple and plain, the deep mourning that it was still proper for her to wear. He knew she had a good room; and there was no lack in his house of the comfortable, on a scale that was highly luxurious compared with her former experience; what could be the matter with this tiresome girl? Caroline's temper, most likely; that was not pleasant no doubt, she did not always so control it as to make it pleasant for him, and he preferred not to speculate upon what it might be for other people; but Helen must put up with it like those other people; she was a fool to quarrel with her bread and butter in such a fashion as this. She did not answer his questions; she only sobbed, so he repeated them:

"Does anyone ill-treat you? Do you want for anything?"

"Nobody. Nothing," she faltered; "but I am very, very unhappy; it is my own fault, I know. You ask me if I want for anything; I do not, that I can explain; but I know what is in my own mind about myself, and I want to go away and earn for myself. I am too much here, and too little; I am not a friend, and not a servant; and I cannot, no, I cannot bear it." She made a strong effort, controlled herself, checked her tears, and went on more calmly. "I am not too young to understand things, and nothing is explained to me. I am very unfortunate, for nobody likes me, except one person, in all the world, and now I must never see her again, if I stay here, and so I would rather, much rather go. But it is not only on account of that I know it would be better. Mrs. Townley Gore does not like me; I have not been able to please her, and I don't think you can imagine how unhappy that makes me."

There was such downright indisputable truth in what Helen said that her hearer did not dream of contradicting her. Nor, little as he understood the feelings of the girl, did he think it would be exactly the thing for him to say to her in so many words what he distinctly thought—i.e. that she was a fool to care whether his wife liked her or not, so long as she was well off in a comfortable house, with all the chances afforded by such a position, of being enabled one day to leave it for as good a one of her own; for he could at least perceive that Helen's pride was in arms. He took, therefore, a ready and decisive course.

"My dear," said he, using, to the astonishment of Helen, a familiar term by which he had never previously addressed her, and placing her in a chair with a quiet but decided movement, "do not excite yourself, and worry me by entering into further explanations. I don't know, and I don't want to know anything about how you and my wife get on, or do not get on together; that is your affair and hers, and I cannot interfere or make myself responsible. You tell me you are to blame, and I am sorry for it. That is the sentimental side of the question; now let us come to the practical side. You talk very glibly about going away and earning for yourself, and it is excusable at your age that you should talk such nonsense."

Helen started, and was about to protest; he stopped her with a slight gesture:

"Hear me out," he continued. "I

know it sounds like sense to you, and you may have had heaven knows what notions of heroism and self-help and so forth put into your head at school. Now, from what I have seen of you, I should think you have very little of the heroic, even of the mock heroic—that is the last fad of the hour—about you, and that you would be a very, very bad hand at helping yourself. I don't mean to be unkind in saying this; quite the contrary. Now here you are, in a comfortable home, under safe protection, the protection your father desired for you; and what do you complain of, what is it you want to get away from? You fancy we don't like you! Well, we are not romantic people certainly, and my wife is a little difficult; but I don't think I am."

"No, no! indeed you are not."

"That's well; at least I have always meant well to you; and you might not find other people a bit easier to get on with than we are. This is the plain common sense of the matter, so far. Now we come to your notions of what you want to do. Will you tell me what they are?"

"Yes," said Helen, "I will; and though I know all you say is kind and true, I still hope you will let me do what is in my mind." And then with some flutter and incoherence at first, but settling down as she proceeded to a clear-enough narrative, she repeated to Mr. Townley Gore the offer which Jane Merrick had made her, just before his own arrival at the Hill House. She declared that she knew her friend would redeem her promise at any time, and entreated him to allow her to adopt the humbler way of life, in which she could be happier and more independent.

The prosperous gentleman heard what this unaccountable girl had to say with uncomfortable feelings. One thing was clear to him: his wife had treated Helen worse than he had suspected; and how this could be remedied, or prevented in the future, was a question that opened up dismal vistas of difficulty, and that particular necessity which he most disliked—the necessity for giving his mind to other people's business. Again, whatever the remedy for the state of affairs, it could not be that which the interpolated and very inconvenient member of his household proposed: however she was disposed of, or was permitted to dispose of herself, the daughter of Herbert Rhodes should not leave his house for that of his wife's milliner.

"Very nice and well-meant of Miss Mer-

rick," he said, when Helen paused, "and just the sort of thing that two inexperienced girls might talk about, and no harm be done, but not to be practically thought of for a moment. I need go no farther than your own words to show you that. You object to dependence upon me, your father's friend; how do you reconcile yourself to dependence on a person not in your own class of life, and a stranger?"

"I should not be dependent for long; I could learn to be of use; and, besides," she blushed, and grew greatly confused here, "there's my own money; I could pay something for myself; and I——"

"Your own money, my dear, I deeply regret to tell you, must not enter into your calculations. It is not available for any such purpose."

"Why? Is it not quite my own? Miss Jerdane told me it was."

"Miss Jerdane believed what she told you; but she was mistaken. Your little fortune is in my hands, and nothing could induce me to allow you to dispose of any part of it in a way of which I should so entirely disapprove."

With increasing embarrassment, Helen still insisted:

"Pray forgive me; I don't mean any disrespect, I only want to understand. I saw the lawyer's first letter to Miss Jerdane, and there was nothing about you in it; not even your name."

"That makes no difference in the fact, as I tell it to you. You cannot dispose of, you cannot get possession of the money without my consent. Come, my dear, let us make an end of this. Don't be fanciful and foolish; make the best of things that are not so bad after all, and try to be more cheerful and pleasant."

He now rose with so decided an appearance of terminating the interview that Helen was helpless; he did not seem to expect a rejoinder to what he had last said, or any promise or assurance; indeed, he presently settled the matter by walking out of the room.

The want of the faculty of looking at things from other people's point of view is a prolific cause of evil in this world. Mr. Townley Gore was deficient in that faculty, and he did serious harm to Helen in consequence. Could he have formed any adequate idea of what the girl had suffered, and of the spirit of revolt that his treatment of her appeal had awakened, he might have been moved to a line of conduct which would have changed all her future history.



As it was, he merely thought of the affair as a worry happily got rid of, at all events for the present.

As for Mrs. Townley Gore, she was neither more nor less disdainfully indifferent to Helen, neither more nor less affected by the consciousness that she had trampled on the girl's heart, than usual. But Helen, learning in her misery and helplessness to use her perceptive faculties, guessed that Mr. Townley Gore had not told his wife anything about her appeal to him.

"I went to the wrong person," thought poor Helen; "if I had had the courage to speak to her, she would have made him let me go, and take my money with me; she would have been too glad to get rid of me to lose the chance. She would not have minded my leaving her house for Madame Morrison's. It would have meant her being relieved of me for ever. Little does he think the pains she takes to let everyone know I am only a poor pensioner."

Helen sat at the window of her room that clear sunshiny afternoon, watching the tide of carriages rolling by, and going over and over again what Mr. Townley Gore had said to her. She had made him no promise, her mind was not changed; she would only yield so far as keeping away from Jane while they remained in Paris was concerned. Afterwards she would write and tell her everything—the strange difficulty about her money included—and ask her for help.

A few days later it seemed as though Helen would find an earlier opportunity of consulting her friend than she had anticipated, for a circumstance occurred that threatened to recall Mr. and Mrs. Townley Gore to England. This was the illness of Mrs. Townley Gore's former guardian, an elderly gentleman whom Helen had seen a few times at the house in Kaiser Crescent, and to whom she was painfully conscious Mrs. Townley Gore had represented her position in the light that was so hurtful to her pride and her feelings.

Mr. Horndean had never taken any notice of her beyond the barest civility, and she had instinctively avoided him. She could not help wondering that Mrs. Townley Gore, whom she knew to be a model of philosophy in the matter of the misfortunes of her friends, should be so much disconcerted by the news of Mr. Horndean's illness; but a short conversation which took place in her presence partially explained the reason.

"We shall have to return at once if he gets worse," said Mr. Townley Gore.

"Of course," asserted his wife. "Could there have been anything more provoking? Just as Paris is worth living in again; I am sure I never believed it could be, under these wretched creatures. That is the best of the French, however; they can keep themselves clear of their political pitch, and fit for us to associate with." Mrs. Townley Gore looked complacently at the great mirror which reflected her elegant figure, and at a *guéridon* beside her, laden with cards and invitations. "It will be inexpressibly annoying if we are hurried back to London. I shall impress it strongly on Mrs. Grimshaw that she is not to croak too much; I must remind her of the false alarm last year."

"Be cautious in what you say, Caroline; a false alarm last year makes it all the more likely this one may not be false. I suppose they have written to Lorton?"

"She does not say," Mrs. Townley Gore glanced over the letter written by Mr. Horndean's housekeeper. "And if they have not, I cannot do it for them, for I have not the remotest idea where he is."

"Indeed!" said her husband uneasily. "It may be very unfortunate if there's any difficulty in getting at him. You had better ask Mrs. Grimshaw the question."

After this nothing more was said for a week, when Mrs. Townley Gore observed to her husband that if on the following Monday the news of Mr. Horndean should be favourable, they might reckon on another month of dear, delightful Paris.

The news of Mr. Horndean was favourable, and the "turn for the better," reported by his housekeeper to Mrs. Townley Gore, enabled that lady to apply herself with the additional satisfaction of a good conscience to the enjoyment of Paris. She troubled herself even less than usual about Helen; but she had taken Mr. Townley Gore's suggestion, that something should be done to amuse her, in very good part.

"Miss Rhodes is not much more amusable than the Grand Monarque of whom my dear old Marquise de Hautlieu talks as if she had known him in her childhood," she observed; "but I will send her to the picture-galleries. Of course, in her deep mourning she can't go 'out,' even if it would be quite fair to the poor girl to take her."

Mr. Townley Gore was fain to be content; that tone was unanswerable.



The month of anticipated delights is within a week of its close, and Paris has become as dear and delightful to the neglected and disdained "young person in whom Mr. Townley Gore takes an interest," as to his handsome and admired wife herself. This change has taken place unperceived by either Mr. or Mrs. Townley Gore; the former does not care enough for Helen to note the alteration in the tone of her voice when she speaks, in the expression of her fair face when she is silent; the latter, though she hates her, does not study her with the close attention of dislike. She is too insignificant for that, a thing of too small account; ready at hand when her enemy chooses to vent her temper on her, but not worth thinking about as an antagonist. So the girl becomes more and more lovely every day, the tea-rose colour deepens in her cheek, the lambent light deepens in her eyes, the delicate lips curve with a proud tender smile, the tall slender figure is held more upright, and the subdued languidness of its movements have given place to supple grace and the light-footedness that befits her blooming girlhood. The days are no longer dreary, nor the waking hours of the night care-laden. When Helen thinks of her father now, it is not with pain and terror as for ever lost to her; it is as loving her and looking at her from some fair unknown world, from whence he has sent her comfort. Perhaps, Helen thought, it was this Jane Merriek meant, when she used to talk to her about the grace of God, and very present help from Heaven. The hours of her solitude were not hours of weariness now; and the sense of neglect and disdain, though it was still present and always justified, had comparatively little pain in it.

Had there been anyone to ask the question: What was the interpretation of this change? the answer would not have been far to seek.

Into the life of Cinderella had come the Prince.

## IN THE FEN COUNTRY.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

"THE only bit of the primeval wilderness left, as far as this writer knows, is two hundred acres of sweet sedge and *Lastrea thelypteris* in Wicken Fen." Thus wrote Charles Kingsley some fifteen years ago, and little or no change has passed over this lingering reed patch since then. Perhaps

a few more acres here and there have been reduced to cultivation, but it still displays its dreary shadeless expanse of brown withered sedge, relieved here and there with stunted willow bushes or green patches, where the young reeds are springing from the old stems shorn at last year's cutting. Century by century the reeds have grown and died, and as we gaze over that tangled-sedge plain we still look on a relic of the "old primeval wilderness."

Unchanged in outward appearance, yet draining has done much during the last few years. In summer the dark peat crackles under foot like tinder, and the vegetation withers for very want of moisture. In an ordinary winter now the ground is spongy, nothing more; only when the floods are out is it submerged, and then the broad pale sheet of water stretches far away on every side. Here and there the taller reeds form brown islands above the surface, and the distant lines of long willow bushes, around which the vegetation clings, stretch away as peninsulas from some distant mainland—for nearer the horizon, foreshortened by perspective, reed-beds, willows and water are mingled confusedly with the shadows of the far-off banks, where the hovering mists magnify the waste of water to an inland sea. But although our imagination may for a moment be roused, and we attempt to assure ourselves that before us still lies a remnant of the grand old fen, yet the absence of life and movement, except the passive bending of the reed-beds as the wind sweeps by, recalls to us that the world which we look upon is not altogether the world it was.

No antlered head rises from yon willow copse as in years now long gone by. Where the floating branches lodge between the bushes no busy toilers are working at their dams, crawling over the stems, and flopping in and out of the water with loud splashes, or, when alarmed, noiselessly gliding down to their cells below. No screaming water-fowl break silence overhead, as, in long arrowy lines or scattered flocks, they wheel to the distant reed-beds. What we look upon is a dead world compared with the teeming life which, we know, was once there. Perhaps a black moorhen ventures timidly from its retreat among the willows, or now and then we hear a peculiar drumming noise rising from the thick herbage, and as we approach, a snipe starts upward with a clatter, darting along in its low angular flights. Perhaps a stray mallard may have found its way to this

flooded wilderness, where it swims round and round the submerged rushes evidently regarding everything with suspicion, then splashing from the water, rises and flaps to some bordering dyke where the reeds make thicker cover. Lucky the mallard that escapes with a whole skin, or even if it be shot-pitted, lucky may he be if he escape at all. "The appearance of a rare bird is enough to set half a village off in pursuit, and the great object of hundreds throughout the country seems just to be to destroy the casual feathered visitor, however interesting it may be, or whatever claims it might seem to possess on our hospitality." This was written twenty years ago; we fear we might go still farther now. The appearance of any big bird spreads excitement among the villages. Hodge comes home to tell how in the gloaming "two gurt birds" wheeled up from the dyke below the drove and "scairt him quite;" how he watched them settle on the pale water far away, and he had "never seen the loike before." "No, they warn't hernshaws; he knows a hernshaw when he sees one," and no amount of questioning can elicit further information but that they were "gurt birds," and he "was too scairt to take much notice." Then at dawn out march the whole village armed to the teeth, Hodge proudly in front, leading the way by the dyke to the low pool where they killed the bittern last year. Here he stops and points with pantomimic gestures to a little reed-bed. Some of the party spread to right and left, lining the tall flood bank, which suddenly seems transformed from a fen drove to a military earthwork as the gun-barrels bristle above the grass; other parties take up equally strong positions on either side. One would imagine for a moment we were in the Netherlands of the sixteenth century, and Alva with his Spaniards was advancing across the fen. There is intense excitement, every trembling barrel is pointed toward the reed patch where, hidden from view, the unfortunate visitors are dabbling among the weeds, unconscious of the commotion they have innocently roused. The signal is given. A score or so of bleached-haired boys who have been attendant on the party rush forward with wild inhuman yells. A harsh frightened cackle and flap of wings from the water as two mallards, or shovellers, or it may be black geese, fly upward, their dark rich plumage glancing in the sun. A line of white smoke belches from the drove, and the roll of the musketry is succeeded

by a victorious shriek as one falls headlong over and over a riddled mass of blood and feathers. But the other, perhaps, is more fortunate; the few pellets he may have received are not sufficient to drop him. On he flaps laboriously, working his poor wounded wings, but the breech-loaders are in play once more, keeping up a running fire behind, and now the flanking parties press forward to hem him in, the fen is filled with white smoke, and the firearms rattle on every side, the shots tear and patter over the reeds where the shock-headed boys, regardless of life, press forward with wild yells. At length he falls too; his sufferings are of short duration; we console ourselves with that as we regard the shattered mass. If it retains any shape at all, as it sometimes does, the squire takes possession, for to whom it belongs by the laws of sport it would be impossible to say, and consigns it to the taxidermist. If otherwise, the bleeding remnant is borne in triumph at the head of the party to be admired by the expectant villagers, and at last given over to the cat: perhaps a few feathers or a wing may appear in the squire's pew at church, to the admiration of all the congregation.

But to return to Wicken Fen. Seldom does the water nowadays rise over the land and convert this broad reed-bed into an inland sea. The fenland is drained and over-drained it would seem; in summer the loose friable earth of the higher lands powders to snuff-coloured dust, and as we stand afar, over the fallow fields it rises in thick dense clouds before the wind. Where there has been standing water the peaty soil is baked into a hard black mass, cracked and seamed under the burning sun.

Wicken is a well-known resort for naturalists, for there still lingers in this tiny piece of the old fen world many a species of plant or insect curious and rare. Some indeed are to be found only here, but dwindling, alas! in numbers year by year. Perhaps the best time to visit it is in the early summer, when the insect life abounds and the flowers make glad with brighter patches the long plain of green or withered sedge.

Far removed from the roar of the railroad, it lies surrounded by flat fields encompassed by dykes and lodes broad and deep.

About a mile from the right bank of the Cam, the pleasantest and easiest road thither from Ely or Cambridge is by the water. After about a ten miles' pull

through lonely pastures, we run up the river-bank to an old whitewashed public, with brick buttressed gable, which has weathered many a fen winter. A huge aspen-tree shadows the narrow road, spreading its broad arms over the thatched roof and rustling about the red-brick chimneys. The green turf slopes downward to the water, where ducks and geese, invariable accompaniments of fen civilisation, quack and gabble the whole day through.

"Five miles from anywhere—no hurry," we read above the door, and the enthusiastic Londoner chuckles at the idea that he is in the wilds at last. The first turn is sufficient to undeceive him.

A row of new cottages, spick and span, as neat and comfortless as hard white bricks and staring windows can make them, tell of nineteenth-century improvements; but we leave these behind, and make our way on toward the fen.

Our only road lies along one of the high grassdoves bordering which the sedge patch lies. To the left, the road rises, fringed with stunted thorn or elm trees to the village, where the grey church-tower stands as a landmark for miles around. On the right, the brown fen stretches shadeless and hot to the hazy horizon, where two tall pumping chimneys mar the level sky-line. An old windmill slowly revolves its battered sails, still ready for work, we suppose, at any emergency, and here we can cross the unfordable dyke.

And a word or two about these fen-dykes. Unhappy he who in his ignorance attempts a short cut across the fen; soon he finds himself enclosed within a bewildering labyrinth of dykes and lodes, the latter truly can be crossed by a swimmer, but the twelve or fifteen feet dyke, with its two feet of water, forms a more formidable barrier. The water is clear, and the reeds grow thick at the bottom, from the rich-coloured earth; but where the bottom begins is the question to be solved; it is only by the clouds of coffee-coloured sediment that rise from beneath the foot, that one can tell when he has touched the ground. It is, at first, altogether impalpable; afterwards, one is conscious of a slimy ooze which embraces the foot in thick warm folds, soft as velvet. Down to the clay beneath this peat mud extends, and seems capable of swallowing up anything. Many a horse has perished in these narrow dykes, smothered and buried in the treacherous peat. Pike from the river find their way up these reed-choked streams; they can be

seen lying motionless in the shallows, ready for a dart at the shoals of dace or minnows, or with cruel eye fixed on the young moorhens splashing and dabbling among the duckweed above. Pike and rats, the natural enemies of the waterfowl, and man on land, between them do their best to exterminate each lingering species.

On the fen we feel at once that we are treading virgin soil; at every footstep we sink in the soft mould of rotted vegetation growing deeper year by year; the dry crisp twigs and withered fibres crackle underfoot as, with considerable labour, we plunge onward waist-deep through the tangled sedge. Here and there shallow furrows, entirely concealed by the growth of reeds, form unexpected pitfalls to the unwary traveller, who suddenly finds himself thrown off his balance knee-deep in water, with the tall sedge singing round his face. There is nothing to do but to fall, and it is a soft mother earth; to catch at the reeds would be an act bordering on insanity; each withered edge cuts like a knife, and although not so deep as to the proverbial bone, still the wounds inflicted by these finely-serrated arrises are, as we can testify, extremely painful.

The first thing that attracts our notice will surely be the magnificent butterflies. The swallow-tailed (*Papilio machaon*), our largest British species, is abundant here, or was ten years ago, when we could have counted hundreds flitting over the reeds; but, like everything else, he is dwindling in numbers. As in the distance he skims the edge for a moment and disappears, at the first sight we are hardly sure whether it was a bird or not; then he rises again, advancing swiftly with slow powerful strokes of his broad wings, and settles close by on a cluster of wild parsley, fanning himself in the sunshine. The creamy yellow of his wings, barred with bands of deepest velvety black, attract everyone's notice; simple as the colouring is, the rich contrast in the upper wings makes him conspicuous at once, and the delicate blue pencillings on the lower completes a delightful harmony of cool subdued colouring. As he sits proudly fanning himself, another flits by, and they rise together, soaring upward higher and higher, until they become two dancing specks and finally vanish from view. This habit of soaring so loftily is provoking to the entomologist, as, waist-deep among the reeds, he toils stumbling and perspiring, regardless of his footsteps, for his eye only is on his prize, which



wings its rapid flight in front, skimming the reed tops, doubling and turning this side and that; then, when he is just within striking distance, and the net is raised, he rises high in air, and the ardent collector can only mop his perspiring face and suck his sedge-cut knuckles while he gazes ruefully at the tiny speck fast disappearing. Powerful as is his flight, he seldom ventures from the sedge—we have repeatedly noticed this from the road without. Careering along the fen, they suddenly reach the boundary dyke; sometimes they hover over it for a second, seldom do they cross it, but turn abruptly and seek the waste of reeds again. We fear that it will soon be extinct, and share the fate of its brilliant brother, the great copper (*Chrysophanus dispar*), whose loss is ever bewailed not only by entomologists but by all lovers of nature. Here, not more than thirty years back, it was to be found abundantly; now it is probably lost for ever to the world, for we were supposed to have had this insect entirely to ourselves, it being unknown on the Continent, while it literally swarmed in our eastern fens. Hopes were entertained that it would appear again somewhere, but so many years have now elapsed that we class it with the fast-lengthening roll of extinct species. Few persons have seen it on the wing; these are the words of one who had: "Its brilliant appearance in the sunshine I shall never forget, and to watch it sitting on the flowers of the *Eupatorium cannabinum* (hemp agrimony) and show the undersides of its wings was something ever to be remembered." The cause of its sudden disappearance has led to many surmisings, but has never been satisfactorily explained; it seems to have vanished all at once and for ever. The above writer attributes its extinction to "the unceasing attacks of collectors, and the burning of the surface-growth of the fen in dry weather." The smaller, and now, alas! the only representative of that brilliant genus, the small copper, one may see everywhere flitting from flower to flower, its tiny wings flashing in the sunshine with a metallic lustre. Here, too, the scarlet tiger moth (*C. dominula*) is found abundantly; seldom is it seen upon the wing, but, as we plunge through the sedge, it rises from beneath our feet with its gorgeous wings outspread a flash of crimson, then after a short weak flight suddenly vanishes as it settles and hides its lower wings. In this most beautiful of all British moths, the combination of colours is truly lovely, the dark metallic

green of the upper wings, relieved by cool cream-coloured spots, contrasts with the dazzling crimson of the lower, the whole forming a rich harmony of colour. Nine persons out of ten uninitiated in entomological lore would regard this brilliant insect as a habitant of the tropics. We have often met a look of incredulous surprise from many when told that the dreariest of fen districts in our eastern counties was the home of these superb insects. Few people, we believe, have any idea of the beauty and variety of our own insect world, much less of the strange localities in which these creatures are to be found, generally the very opposite to those we should have imagined. In this fen patch they still breed year by year, and not only those which for the very beauty of their colouring attract general admiration, but many another whose dingy-tinted wings would be passed unnoticed by the ordinary observer, but is counted a prize by entomologists, still lingers in this last refuge, and only here.

Rich though the fen may be in the brilliancy of its insect life, the animal world is but sparsely represented. Along the ditches where the reeds grow high the everlasting song of the reed-warbler may always be heard, as he sits above the water in his nest, fast bound between the reeds, which, as they sway in the violent winds, nearly force it to a horizontal position. Here, too, if he is left anywhere, we might, perhaps, find the bearded titmouse, the most beautiful of our tits, with its handsome plumage and glossy-black beard. A wagtail now and then darts over the reeds, snapping up an unfortunate butterfly, to devour at leisure in some secluded spot. In winter, the thick reed-beds form cover for water-fowl driven from the north, for then the fen is more secluded, and hardly visited by man. All through the summer months the reed-cutters are at work, cutting, binding, and stacking the sedge, or loading the black barges moored along the edge. Then, as the low dark hulks glide slowly up stream, each with its high-stacked freight, they bear away whole worlds of hidden insect life, and now and then the last hope of some rare species which hereafter the fen will know no more.

But there are patches of bright colouring here and there along the waste of reeds, for the fen, as Ramsay of old, is still "painted with a thousand flowers in spring." Where the meadow-sweet grows luxuriantly, broad masses of pale cream-

colour spread along the sedge, edged with crimson where the tall spikes of loosestrife and of willow herb rise high above, nearly cutting the sky-line, so low is the horizon. In most of the clear dykes around, even in that which borders the drove, so secluded does it lie, the great white water-lilies (*Nymphaea alba*) still unfold their waxen cups, floating proudly among the crowd of yellow water-blobs that dot the surface everywhere. Above, an innumerable forest of rushes towers upwards luxuriantly, from the bright red and yellow petals of the iris and flowering rush to the sober reed-mace, with its dark velvety clubs overtopping all. Each thick stem is honeycombed by the caterpillars of a common moth (*Nonagria typhæ*), abundant here where the reed-mace grows, furnishing it with both food and lodging, in which it remains concealed until bursting through the soft tissue the moth first sees the day. But perhaps the most beautiful of the rush family is the most abundant—the common reed—rising six or eight feet from the water, with its long stem and heavy-feathered panicle of grey-purplish flowers. When the wind blows gently over these reed-crowded dykes, the shades pass on in long waves as the tall heads sway, ruffling each downy crest into lights and shadows manifold, subdued and ever changing. In the early part of the summer, before the intense heat of the sun has scorched the shadeless vegetation, patches of marsh-fern form here and there a carpet of the most brilliant green, but long before the summer has ended the delicate fronds are shrivelled and burnt under the rays from very lack of moisture. This, as far as we know, is the only fern that flourishes in the fen country, and there but locally. Here, at Wicken, it grows luxuriantly, thrusting itself from the brown tangle of sedge, around every willow bush, whose scanty shade, however, affords but little protection from the heat.

Animal life, in the shape of quadrupeds, we may say, is altogether absent, with the sole exception of rats. Snakes, of course, are abundant, rustling, when disturbed, through the reeds; gliding swiftly and noiselessly between the lush rank grass that fringes the dykes, they make for some rat-hole in the bank, or take to the water, swimming gracefully, with the head and neck curved above the surface. So common are they, that one may frequently be felt concealed in the herbage wriggling beneath our feet, but they are all of the harmless

ringed species, and as timid, as a rule, as they are harmless. If provoked, however, the head is raised, the tiny tongue vibrates, and hissing softly, they rear themselves with a menacing air toward the intruder, but unless persistently annoyed, this boldness of temper is seldom displayed. But we have known an instance of one disputing with a horseman the path on a high fen droveway; raising itself erect from the grass, swaying and hissing, and boldly maintaining its ground before the frightened horse, it at length forced the rider to dismount and despatch it. In these marshy retreats, where they are comparatively unmolested, they attain to considerable dimensions; specimens may sometimes be met with upwards of three feet in length, the patriarchs of the tribe.

As we look on this lingering fen patch of to-day surrounded on every side by broad cultivated fields, we cannot but think of what it must have been even a century or two ago. When to the east by Soham Mere, the water stretched, perhaps, from its very reed-beds a long pale sheet, and in its own thick wilderness the wildfowl swarmed by thousands and ten thousands; when, northward some eight miles by reed and water, Ely, the island city, rose grey against the sky. Then what will be its future? What will it be a century hence, or even ten years hence, for all we know? Broad cultivated flats, like those around, from which mighty harvests of roots and corn will be gathered in, and the fenland will exist in name alone, and carry with it no signification but in a historical sense, as of a vanished world.

It would be a grand work for all lovers of nature to preserve these few acres as a relic of what the fenland was, as a vast aviary, where the reeds would, as of old, teem with waterfowl, and the ruffs again beat down the sedges for their fighting hills, and heron and bittern wade unmolested in the shallows. The storks and spoonbills, avocets, godwits, shovellers, and all our other extinct species—even the clumsy black coot, we must now almost class with these brilliant-plumaged rare ones. Could they not be all brought back again? We fear it is but a dream. One could scarcely expect this money-making age to give up three or four hundred acres for such a quixotic purpose, so, as a consolatory thought, we conclude with the words of Charles Kingsley: "Ah well! at least we shall have wheat and mutton instead."

## HERR CRAMBO.

## A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON.

## IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THROWING his sombrero beside his pipe on the little garden-table between us, Herr Crambo sprang to his feet on resuming his discourse, and then—standing immediately in front of me with his long arms and fingers alternately protruded and retracted in the excitement of what he was insisting upon with such exaggerated earnestness—fixed me with his glowing eyes, nay, it almost seemed to me with every prong of his dishevelled hair as I sat there watching him observantly.

Quickened though my attention was very naturally, under the circumstances, I nevertheless had a consciousness stealing over me, not improbably induced by my recent fatigue, that I was beginning to listen to him somewhat drowsily, while at the same moment I continued, lazily and contentedly enough, to blow whiffs of smoke from my meerschaum, as he continued:

"Premising now for a moment a more pointed reminder than any I have yet given you as to the deceptive character of what, superficially regarded, might appear the most reliable of all our senses, namely, that of sight, let me, just in passing, impress upon you a consideration of the indisputable physiological fact, that the retina is something more than merely an expansion of the optic nerve, that it is nothing less in truth than a medium for the presentation to us of the visual images we behold. In other words, the retina is not the sensitive surface on which those images are reflected in a manner analogous to the shadowing forth of any object upon the sensitised plate of the photographer. Passing literally through the retina, the rays of light, after impinging upon the black pigment beneath it—penetrating while so doing a wondrous maze of microscopic fibres, rods, cones, and granules—so stimulate the excitability of the nerve, so waken its latent sensibility as thereby to convey intelligence direct to the brain, and through that to the mind or inner consciousness. Conceive to yourself, therefore, for one instant the exquisitely ductile sensitiveness of all those numerous, subtle, and complicated agencies I have been enumerating, when brought through this one sense, under the influence of a dominant power such as that men have called, for

want of any better term, animal magnetism. You perceive, still, the force of what I have been maintaining?"

Startled out of a half nod by this point-blank enquiry, I said: "Well, yes, surely I do; but then?"

"Why then," Herr Crambo went on, "waiving for a moment any serious question as to the validity of the science, or, call it if you prefer the mere pseudo-science of animal magnetism, I content myself with referring here to the known laws and admitted operations of a material element, the reality of which is recognised upon all hands as among the rudimentary truths of natural philosophy. This material element, which is the nearest approximation to what is termed life, though it is certainly not life, is familiarly known to all men, nowadays, as electricity. Now, electricity in its application has been proved capable—mark this—of expanding and contracting bodies; a truth demonstrable any day through what is known as electrolysis. Still speaking, observe, not of odic force, not of mesmeric influences, not of animal magnetism, but of this universally recognised and admitted agency, or, in yet plainer terms, this material element of electricity—according to the beautiful theory of Ampère, separate currents of electricity so powerfully influence each other, that of two transverse currents (note this, again, especially) the stronger always controls the weaker. And, having said this, let me add, that while the effects of the so-called phenomena of animal magnetism, or of the influence of the mesmeric trance, may be, and still are, in fact, denied by our natural philosophers, the latter are to this hour, nevertheless, so entirely in the dark themselves as to the operations of the known element I have been descanting upon, that it is still hypothetical, it is still entirely a moot question, whether nerve force is or is not identical with electricity. More than that, it is admitted by popular physiologists, even in the most elementary treatises, that the electric action of animal bodies, even under its most ordinary aspects, even in its most familiar effects, is far more powerful and far more marvellous (these are their own admissions) than anything that has ever been recorded in regard to mesmerism or animal magnetism. Remembering this, and remembering also the indisputable fact that physical action in animals is accomplished by what can alone be described with strict accuracy as electro-mechanical appliances, I come, now, my dear Felix, to that actual



and visual demonstration which I have already promised."

In my remembrance of what followed I am conscious of having by this time laid my meerschau on the table so as to give what was being addressed to me, if it might only be in any way possible, my undivided attention. Nevertheless, I was only too painfully aware that in spite of every effort on my part to concentrate my regard upon what was occurring, my attention to my companion's arguments was being just now doubly distracted. This double distraction arose upon the one hand out of my own increasingly drowsy condition, and upon the other out of what seemed to be setting at defiance the languor and fatigue which must otherwise have irresistibly drifted me away, if not into a comatose state, into a sort of waking dream, to wit, the weird, eltrich effect from this time forward of Herr Crambo's every movement. Whether I report his words correctly, henceforth I know not, but at any rate, they are set down here to the best of my recollection.

"Philosophy has long ago said that man is situated between two infinitudes; not simply with reference to duration as between a past and a future eternity; but with regard to the occupants of space, between the infinitely great and the infinitely little—peering into the former through the telescope, and into the latter through the microscope. Reflect for one moment upon the dominant peculiarity of the outer universe, and tell me what is the attribute at once apparent there in relation to the whole of those material existences, the orbs, systems, constellations of the visible heavens. It is that, surely, of suns, planets, and satellites in ceaseless revolution—of revolution not only upon their own axes, but around one another in whirling and endless gyrations. Curiously enough, too, as if by a Mosaic anticipation of Copernicus, the Hebrew word for the earth, Arats (ארץ), is derived from the word Rots (רוץ), signifying a Runner, it might even be said a Rotator. Or, take into consideration, again, the inner, or microscopic universe, and, having done so, tell me in which of the animalcula it is that life seemingly approaches the most closely to what we might almost be tempted to call the indestructible? Is it not in the Rotifera, otherwise in those wonderful little wheel animalcula which—with an

interval of years between the two operations—can be dried and moistened, and can certainly to all appearance, in this drying and moistening, be killed and then reanimated? You have probably wondered before now at the apparent folly of my devotion for years, but more particularly of late years, to the sports of the gymnasium. Yet, has it never occurred to you that there is a certain dignity in the very etymology of the word 'acrobat,' derivable as it is in its Greek origin from *akros*, to the summit—*βᾶω*, I go? Why, your own Shakespeare has surely recognised something of this when he shrinks not from putting into the mouth of one of the most tragic of all his heroes what was evidently regarded by him as no ignoble figure of speech, seeing that he employs it at the very moment when he is striving to make Macbeth's every utterance the most impressive where he identifies the grand incentive to the homicide he is meditating as a

Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on the other side.

"Whether you may or may not yourself have recognised the full symbolic importance of gyrations in the abstract—as visible under their sublimest aspect in the revolving spheres or as cognisable in their minutest in the irrepressible and all but indestructible Rotifera—the most philosophical lyrist of modern times, our own incomparable Schiller, has most certainly had some glimpse of the mystery where he has set to the music of his song the very music of the spheres, asking with an air of exultation what, among other things, bestows such restless life upon the reeling maze of the worlds in their orbits, what modulates to the order of repose the ceaseless whirl of their revolutions?

Sprich, wie geschieht's dass rastlos ernent die Bildungen schwanken,  
Und die Ruhe besteht in der bewegten Gestalt?

"Life in every form, whether in the rolling orb or in the living creature, passes, be sure of that, through its circling cycles of development. Human existence has, from this point of view, been roughly portioned out into four eras, those namely of the foetal epoch, of infancy, of manhood, and of old age. More subtly subdivided, it has been typically traced by Shakespeare in the Seven Ages, the hero of which panoramic survey—for it has but one hero, remember, and not seven—is familiar to us all, and that moreover quite equally under each of his rapidly-defined transformations.

As rapidly as these symbolled changes are described by Jaques in his lovely reverie, so rapidly may be realised to the living organisation (I have proved this) the changes which have already in its regard been accomplished. And no less clearly in the retrospect can these same changes, under certain conditions, be rendered apparent to another as I am at this very moment upon the verge of demonstrating. Athlete and mystic though I may be deemed and designated in a tone of derision by the ordinary run of mortals, I have been enabled, nevertheless, as you shall yourself immediately acknowledge, to bring the past and present together in my own person, rendering them visible to yourself here in the broad daylight, in the bright sunshine, on the grassy carpet of this sward, in the quiet seclusion of this green pleasaunce! As actually present to your sight, now that you are lapsing completely into mesmeric repose under the influence of my persistent passes, and under the basilisk gaze of a will superior at the moment to your own, these changes shall appear as vividly apparent to your sense of vision as the leaping and revolving figure of an acrobat, seen by a child in the familiar toy of the so-called Zoetrope, or Wheel of Life, that latest outcome of the old-world device of the little twirling disc of the Thaumatrope. Now that the mesmeric sleep has at last been effectually produced in your instance, I am enabled at length, as the perfecting phase in the process of this demonstration, freely to apply introspectively to my own memory a powerful, nay, in point of fact, an irresistibly authoritative act of volition. Before the dominant mandate of a will far surpassing in its superiority the fleeting, fluctuating form it inhabits, that mobile form itself (always, even when at its best, the merest fading, vanishing vapour!) yields with an absolute submission. To and fro—reverting to the past, returning to the present—according to my momentary whim and pleasure, the form I have possessed at different epochs of my life will appear at the bidding of my will under the clarified gaze of your now supernatural clairvoyance. Besides—and this shall be my last statement—physiologists have made plain to the comprehension of us all, that after a certain given number of years, seven at the lowest computation, eight or ten more probably, not a particle of the original substance of our bodies in the preceding epoch can be said any longer to be in existence.”

At this juncture a pause occurred, during which I was luxuriously conscious of being at one and the same time—how shall I express it?—dreamily awake with closed eyes, and yet peacefully slumbering. In the hush which prevailed, I became aware—as it seemed to me, even then, rather preposterously—of the shrill voice of my companion, quietly observing to me with a chuckle, just as he might have made the same remark cosily in the old time across one of the tavern-tables at the Wrekin: “Don’t you remember Sydney Smith’s saying to the old lady in answer to her exclamation of incredulity as to his delight in the hot weather, in taking off his flesh and sitting in his bones: ‘Fact, my dear madam; next time, come and see me do it.’”

Lightly touching me upon the arm as he thus spoke, Herr Crambo with that simultaneous touch and voice seemed to arouse me, upon the instant, from my state of lethargy. How possibly, however, shall I be able to describe the grimly eltrich scene which I then witnessed? Herr Crambo had by that time resumed his heavy green spectacles, while his pronged hair appeared to radiate more wildly than ever from his head, which still remained uncovered.

At the very moment of my eyes being opened, his angular limbs were preparing for a spring which was instantly followed by a series of long bounding back-somersaults. At each of these he was, just momentarily, as he stood, for that twinkling of an instant, on his receding feet, like a creature transformed. In age, in stature, in each retreating leap, he became, farther and farther back, his former self! Forty-five, thirty-five, twenty-five, fifteen, five. And then, returning through a precisely similar series of forward-somersaults, dilating upon my view the whole like an advancing figure in a phantasmagoria, he reverted by a succession of topsy-turvy bounds, from the curly-pated little child, to the slender stripling, to the long-haired German student, to the adult, first in his bloom and then in his prime, until he stood before me once more, no other than my old fantastic companion in his familiar but grotesque identity! Again, and yet again, in retreat, in advance, more and more rapidly, as though he were himself carried away by the feverish excitement of what was evidently passing completely beyond his own control, resembling more vividly than ever one of those grasshoppers to which he has here been already likened, those “high-elbowed grigs,” as the poet—

laureate dubs them, "that leap in summer grass"—he passed more swiftly in each course from end to end, along the whole length of the spacious bowling-green, through these astounding and bewildering transformations. Until, at the very close, when, with a fiercer way than ever upon him, he made yet another succession of these same goblin back-somersaults, upon his coming to what had hitherto been the last of all, revealing him to me for an instant as a little child of five, what was my horror upon beholding him (as if in apparent forgetfulness of the inevitable consequence) turn yet another, and in the very act, disappear!

An involuntary cry of dismay, I remember, escaped my lips, but in another moment I had lapsed into unconsciousness.

When I recovered my recollection, after evidently but a very few seconds' oblivion, the westerling sun being still nearly level with the top of the tall holly hedge at the further extremity of the bowling-green, as nearly as possible exactly as I had seen it at the moment of swooning, Jean Baptiste, I found, had contrived to raise me from the grass where I had fallen, and was assisting me to one of the garden-chairs, just as the buxom little hostess, all in a flutter, made her appearance at the entrance. They had been startled by my cry, as I afterwards learnt, and had at once hurried to my assistance.

Anything like an accurate explanation to them as to the cause of my agitation was, as may be readily understood, absolutely out of the question under the circumstances. My travelling companion had disappeared, that was all. Incomprehensibly to them he had left even his slouched hat behind him. The German pipe and tobacco-pouch, the half-emptied flask, the saddle-bags, even the Roman-nosed cart-horse, and, what upon examination proved to be the most important derelict of all, the well-stuffed pocket-book, were left as witnesses to me the next morning that I had not been merely dreaming wildly overnight.

Fortunately for my employers, both in the new world and in the old, I was in ample time to describe as an eye-witness the appalling carnage which took place on, perhaps, the bloodiest field of all in that ghastly campaign—the field of Rezonville. Throughout the rest of the war, in spite of all the distractions of that portentous epoch, I was haunted more or less continually by the thought of my eccentric companion, of our strange rencontre, and

above all, of his astounding disappearance. Vaulting ambition had indeed with a vengeance in his instance overleaped itself. The lawless experimentalist had, for once and for all, only too literally lost himself in his researches.

Guided by an address which I contrived at length with some difficulty to decipher among my friend's papers, and which read to me, so far as my long-puzzled eyes could in any way decide, "Ichabod Crambo, Number so-and-so, Kanfingerstrasse, München," I managed, when the close of the war enabled me at last to make a journey to the capital of Bavaria for the express purpose, to place in the hands of Herr Crambo's representatives the few goods and chattels which he had so strangely left behind him, and which, in the eerie manner I have related, had passed for a while into my bewildered possession.

#### A LANCASHIRE SUPERSTITION.\*

"DEAD, dead, and so he be, honey. We've all to die i' turn;

But I scarcelins thought I'd ha' to live my first bairn's bairn to murn.

He looks comely on his pillow, now thou's sleeked his bonnie hair,

And folded his strong brown hands, and put a rose to blossom there.

"And t' parson's said his prayer and gone, and thou's ta'en t' poor lass away?

She'll sob hersen to sleep enow, and wake to her heavy day.

And now thou'lt do my bidding. Gang up t' moor on t' brow,

And cut a sod and bring it down; the heather's blooming now.

"And set it upon his broad young breast, all purple, and fresh, and strong;

It'll keep the red i' t' smiling lips, an' t' glow on t' cheek for long;

It'll hold the awsome greyness back that creeps so sure and fast,

That we well-nigh shrink frev what we love when we stoop to kiss our last.

"Then, when t' funeral-cakes are baked, and t' bidding-bell is rung,

And the coffin waits for him, our lad, who left us all so young,

We may lay him, fair as a wedding-guest, i' t' safety of t' sod,

Till t' angel calls him, brave and bright, to meet t' smile of God."

#### LORD BEACONSFIELD'S "GOOD THINGS."

NOTHING was more certain than that Lord Beaconsfield, the best-abused man of his time, except Prince Bismarck, while living, would receive when dead a generous meed of praise from politicians of every hue. Nothing was ever predicted with greater confidence, and no prophecy has

\* In Lancashire it is believed that a fresh sod, laid on the breast of a corpse, prevents decay.



been more exactly fulfilled. The big dogs of the journalistic and literary tanyard have barked their loudest, and it was not to be wondered at, for was not Benjamin Disraeli one of themselves, the son of a man of letters, who rose by sheer ability to be an English Earl, a Knight of the Garter, and Premier of England at a momentous period? It has been remarked that, through the whole of his ardent and exciting political life, his literary instinct never left him, that as Earl of Beaconsfield he was as proud and careful of his style in Lothair and Endymion as when Benjamin Disraeli was "The Wondrous Boy who wrote *Alroy*;" but it has, I believe, not been written down, but only remarked in casual conversation, that the great man just now dead had one qualification very rare among English people, be they Jew or Gentile,

It was, I think, Mr. Grant Duff, the present Under Secretary for the Colonies, who is reported to have said that the "mots" of Lord Beaconsfield would be recollected when his politics were forgotten. This is matter, perhaps, for posterity, but it is not easy to ignore it; for who, nowadays, cares a brass farthing for Talleyrand's political convictions, if any? But his "good things" are fresh and green, and are adapted, re-adapted, and furnished up from time to time. Dr. Johnson, again, lives in the mind as the sayer of good things. Does anybody, I wonder, ever read the *History of Rasselas*, Prince of Abyssinia, and the *Lives of the Poets*, and *The Rambler*? Is there a schoolboy with soul so dead to cricket, oar, and football, as to know anything about the *Vanity of Human Wishes*? He may know the quotation "from China to Peru," from having seen it in a newspaper; but he will not know that it is a paraphrase of Juvenal's well-known verse, and is coupled with one of the weakest and poorest lines in the English language. Yet he is aware of Johnson's quips and repartees, his ponderous jokes and crushing rejoinders. The politics of his great contemporary Lord Chesterfield are forgotten, and the late Lord Melbourne only dwells in memory by virtue of having expressed his opinion in favour of "letting things alone."

The living Bismarck, again, is a notable sayer of good things; rough and polished, complete and suggestive. Nothing could be better or fuller of colour than his remark that "a Russian is a good fellow till he tucks his shirt in;" that is, until he tries to become a gentleman. What saying

could be more appropriate to the Parisians than that of letting them "cook in their own gravy?"

Regard being had to these examples, the observation of Mr. Grant Duff appears far more acute than it did at the first blush, for Lord Beaconsfield said an inconceivable number of "good things" in his speeches, in his novels, and in his conversations, little bits of which are even now floating about in what is called "society." The prophetic "The time will come when you will hear me," was followed by many a shrewd and pithy saying before the author murmured on his death-bed, in allusion to the supposed torturing of the Nihilists, that he was very sensible to pain and "should have confessed everything." This remark is also an instance of the happy faculty of its author of "picking up" his illustrations like his facts as he went along. This peculiarity always gave his "good things" the happy quality of appearing to arise out of the discussion of the previous question instead of being dragged in by the ears. They have, too, the great merit of suggestiveness. What an excellent rendering of the "garrulus, laudator temporis acti," is that of the elderly gentleman in his "anecdote!"

How suggestive the observation is that "the English language is greatly in want of a new set of images," was proved in these very pages of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*, by a writer who imagined a concrete exhibition of the worn-out similes and metaphors of the English people, wherein were shown the "thin end of the wedge," "the long lane that has no turning," "the stone that killed the two birds," the rolling ditto "which gathered no moss," the stitch which being taken in time saved nine, the stick which served to beat a dog; Caesar's wife, above an allegorical figure of "suspicion," the Englishman's house showing its castellated structure, and a glass ditto unsafe for stone-throwers. There were, in this collection also, or ought to have been, a flask of the peculiar oil that is "poured upon the waters," the rock upon which people "split," a sketch of the original "coign of vantage," a portrait of the amateur who blacked himself all over to play Othello, a feather of the birds who flock together, the skin of the monkey who would not talk for fear he would be made to work, the "screw" that is always "loose," the "right nail" so rarely "hit on the head," and the remains of the lamb who was silly enough to "lie down with the lion."

In the same book, Lothair, one of the characters, is made to say that when he wants to read a book he writes one, and another that a country house on Sunday is "infernal." These sayings are infinitely suggestive, and, in fact, have suggested scores of leading articles and other essays. One knows that something like them has been said before. There is the unforgotten friend of Charles Lamb, who "left off reading to the great increase of his originality," himself an adaptation of Sir John Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington, who observes: "Far to mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Naw, I think a man of quality and breeding may be much better diverted with the natural sprouts of his own." Similarly the saying of Jules Janin that he would rather pass twenty-four hours in the well of the great Pyramids than a Sunday in London is as well known as his observation to Théophile Gautier that he would be unable to write about Spain, "because" he had been there, and his imagination was consequently cumbered and crippled with useless and unmanageable facts. But although it is easy to anecdotic persons to trace the source of Lord Beaconsfield's inspiration, it is not, therefore, forbidden to admire his wonderful force and brilliancy as a renovator and adaptor, and his daring at times as an absolute plagiarist. He of all men most had the habit to "prendre son bien où il le trouvait," and might have written up in his library instead of, "It's canny to say nowt," as Mr. Edmund Yates does, or "Mak sicker," like the present scribe, an older saying from an older language, "Quidquid ubique bene dictum facio meum."

Throughout his life Lord Beaconsfield succeeded in saying and writing things the position of which is difficult to define. They were not humorous, but they were trenchant and telling. When the late Sir Robert Peel, Lord Beaconsfield's "dearest foe," abolished the corn laws he had so long defended, taking the "opporchuntee" of the Irish famine, he was reminded that he "stole the Whigs' clothes while they were bathing." When Mr. Gladstone was last in office, and was unrestfully worrying everybody, shutting up public-houses, and trying to make something out of the Irish chaos, he was reminded that he was "meddling and muddling," or "plundering and blundering." There is no more spontaneity about these sayings than in those of

Talleyrand, who carried a sort of French Joe Miller, yclept *L'Improvisateur Français*, in eighteen volumes, duodecimo, everywhere with him. As Talleyrand looked up his jokes and shaped them while in bed in the morning, so did, without doubt, Mr. Disraeli arrange his conversational and oratorical "hits." Sometimes, however, he was forced, as it were, on an impromptu; and then he rarely failed, for he never lost his temper, and never forgot that he was *en scène*.

During the height of the so-called "Jingo" excitement, when men, and more especially women, were almost unendurable on account of their political vehemence, Lord Beaconsfield was, apparently at least, perfectly calm. Seated at dinner by the side of an illustrious lady, he was asked in tones full of feminine petulance: "What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for?"—the implication being amazement that he did not hurl England into a war against Russia. "Waiting?" said he; "I am waiting for some roast mutton and potatoes."

In a speech in 1853, on foreign relations, just now peculiarly pertinent, Lord Beaconsfield spoke in very strong and manly fashion. "It is not probable I shall ever say or do anything which should tend to depreciate the influence of Parliament or the Press. My greatest honour is to be a member of this House, in which all my thoughts and feelings are concentrated; and as for the Press, I am myself a gentleman of the press, and have no other escutcheon."

What is especially remarkable in Lord Beaconsfield's sayings and doings is a certain happy audacity. When Lord Palmerston twitted him with not having been provided with office under Sir Robert Peel's administration, he retorted at once that "the noble viscount was a consummate master of the subject, and if the noble viscount would only impart to him the secret by which he had himself contrived to retain office during seven successive administrations, the present debate would certainly not be without a result."

But he was never greater than when completely in the wrong and brought to bay. It was Mr. Abraham Hayward, Q.C., the well-known Quarterly Reviewer, the author of the famous article on *The Art of Dining*, the brilliant raconteur, and successful translator of *Faust*, who once thought he had pinned Mr. Disraeli to the wall like a cockchafer. The affair arose

out of Mr. Disraeli's daring plagiarism of M. Thiers, in his speech on the Duke of Wellington. The circumstances which led to the discovery are curious, as curious as any of those narrated by M. Edouard Fournier in *L'Esprit dans l'Histoire*. In the years 1848-50, Mr. Hayward had done a large share of the work of *The Morning Chronicle*, and was associated in the conduct of that newspaper with George Smyth, afterwards Lord Strangford, "Jacob Omnium" Higgins, Professor Goldwin Smith, and Mrs. Norton, who shone as a leader-writer. During this period it happened that Mr. Disraeli made sundry depreciatory remarks upon the "military mind;" thus following, if he ever read his works, Henry Fielding, who observed that a benevolent Providence had granted fighting persons skulls of exceeding thickness, to the end that they might the more successfully resist the hard knocks incidental to their profession. Knowing more than one language, and not living entirely in the open air, the men of *The Morning Chronicle* countered Mr. Disraeli's attack on the intellect of soldiers by printing a translation of a magnificent passage in an article in the *Revue Française* on the *Maréchal St. Cyr*, written by M. Thiers. It is hardly credible, but is nevertheless true, that Mr. Disraeli, in his scorn of the intelligence of average Britons, actually took this passage, which had been translated and quoted against him, and interpolated it word for word, blunders in translation and all, into the oration which, as leader of the House of Commons, it was his duty to pronounce on the death of the Duke of Wellington. The coup was sublime in its audacity; but the old writers on the *Chronicle* took counsel together, and secured the insertion of the speech and the translated passage of M. Thiers's article in *The Globe*. Every kind of attempt was made to explain away the charge of plagiarism, and it appeared as if Mr. Disraeli's friends would win the day, when an article in *Fraser's Magazine*, from the pen of Mr. Hayward, exposed the affair, and showed that the plagiarism was not a mere matter of taking a thought, but of copying a complete passage; whereupon Mr. Disraeli, who was told all about it by some candid friend, raised his hand and, appearing to brush some insect off his left sleeve, said, "Why this man is a literary ——" naming a little beast familiar to man.

As Lord Beaconsfield in this place is rather dealt with as a wit than as a poli-

tician and man of letters, as a phrase-maker than as a law-maker, it is quite beside the purpose to note such things as are purely political. Yet it is difficult to pass over so good a phrase as that of "educating his party." The circumstances under which he and the Conservative party stood, unavoidably force themselves into notice. By his brilliant attack on Peel at a moment when the protectionist battalions were broken and discouraged, he had constituted himself their virtual leader. He had led the party successfully, but his open expression of contempt must have been hard to bear. Speaking to the Conservatives of Edinburgh in 1867, he went into a review of the subject of Reform, and defended the Bill which had then but recently been passed under his management by the Government of the late Lord Derby. Speaking of the preceding seven years he said: "During that period—with the advice, I may say under the instruction, of my colleagues—I expressed the principles upon which any measure of Parliamentary reform ought to be established. Now, mark this, because these are things which you may not have heard in any speech which has been made in the city of Edinburgh. I had to prepare the mind of the country, and to educate—if it be not arrogant to use such a phrase—to educate our party."

Almost equally famous is the phrase, "loom in the future," employed by Mr. Disraeli when Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852, and his frank confession of occasional heedlessness. There are people in the world who argue as if one were the same person towards the end of a career as at the beginning of it, are always fond of talking of the inconsistencies of great statesmen, and reminding them of expressions used a quarter of a century earlier. During a debate on the Irish Church in 1868, Mr. Disraeli was frequently confronted with the expressions made use of by him in 1844. He said, in his imperturbable manner, that he could retort upon others in the same manner if he wished, "but," he added, "I do not much care for that sort of thing. With reference, however, to that passage which has been quoted from a speech made by me, I may remark that it appeared to me at the time I made it that nobody listened to it." (He had not yet made his great stroke by attacking Peel.) "It seemed to me that I was pouring water upon sand, but it seems now that the water came from



a golden goblet. With regard to the passage from that speech, there are many remarks which, if I wanted to vindicate or defend myself, I might legitimately make. . . . All this I might say; but I do not care to say it, and I do not wish to say it, because in my conscience the sentiment of that speech was right. It may have been expressed with the heedless rhetoric which I suppose is the appanage of all who sit below the gangway."

"Rhetor" Lord Beaconsfield undoubtedly was to the last. In his last illness Mr. Millais was "Apelles" to him. In his last novel one finds certain covertly on a great nobleman's estate, reserved exclusively "for knights of the garter." This last is one of those strange phrases which, especially when proceeding from a lord of irony, have a suspicious ring as if he were laughing inwardly at the shallow reader who should mistake him for a snob. That he had a hearty contempt for the majority of the party he "educated" is shown clearly by his sneer at them for "speaking only one language, and living entirely in the open air." Over and over again he expressed his admiration for rhetoric. Who has forgotten his remarks on the necessity for a party-cry, "Our young Queen and our old Constitution," introduced ironically of course, but yet with a thorough belief in the success of well-imagined claptrap. When the Irish Church was disestablished, Mr. Miall brought forward a motion for the extension of disestablishment to the other churches of the kingdom. Mr. Disraeli, in speaking against it, admitted that the principle was logical, but characteristically added, "Fortunately the country was not governed by logic. It was governed by rhetoric, and not by logic, or otherwise it would have been erased long ago from the list of leading communities."

Though generally agreeable at table, he was at times the most reserved and, it may be added, absorbed of men. When his acquaintance was sought by that remarkable old lady, Mrs. Bridges Willyams, who lies in his vault at Hughenden Church, he never took the trouble to look quite through her letter. The front page contained a request to be admitted to his presence. He read no more, but thrust the letter into his pocket. Three weeks afterwards he received an almost imploring letter from the same old lady, who said that she had called in the interim, but without being so fortunate as to see him,

and begged that he would consider her first letter carefully, and reply to it, as it was an "earnest" of what she wished to do. It was not easy to find the letter. It was not in any pigeon-hole or *escritoire*. Finally it was discovered in the breast-pocket of an old coat only used for writing in, and on being properly opened was found to contain a bank-note for a thousand pounds! Mr. Disraeli did not lose an instant. He took the next train and went down to see his venerable admirer, who now lies buried in his vault, and who left him in her will thirty-five thousand pounds. It was not, therefore, with reference to his wife alone that he said he "owed much to the favour of women."

Many of Lord Beaconsfield's good things were said on extra-parliamentary occasions. His historic sneer at his great rival was made at the dinner given at Knightsbridge by the Conservative party to celebrate the return of Lords Beaconsfield and Salisbury from Berlin in 1878. It is one of the few instances in which Benjamin Disraeli allowed political heat to overcome both good taste and good style. He had just come back from Berlin. He had made that famous speech on the pier at Dover, in which he proclaimed, in a voice of thunder, that "Peace with honour" had been secured. He had every reason to be satisfied with his reception that day; but he was irritated at some criticisms by Mr. Gladstone, in the course of which the Convention of Constantinople was designated "an insane convention." It would be difficult to believe, were not the evidence incontestable, that the author of so many witty phrases could have, even in an after-dinner speech, used this atrociously-composed sentence: "A sophistical rhetorician, inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and gifted with an egotistical imagination, that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign his opponents and to glorify himself." Is it conceivable that this could have been said by the same man who, when speaking of the Derby, beat Lord Palmerston's "Isthmian Games" out of sight with the memorable "blue ribbon of the turf?"

There is reason, however, to believe that his prejudice against Mr. Gladstone quite overcame at times his generally calm and well-balanced judgment. It is said, and on fairly good authority, that Lord Beaconsfield never forgave Mr. Gladstone for his own earldom. To put the matter

in more words, he long believed, if he did not die in the belief, that Mr. Gladstone's retirement from the nominal leadership of the Liberal party in favour of Lord Hartington was a mere ruse de guerre, a party trick to get him out of the House of Commons. It is quite certain that he would not knowingly have left the Conservatives in the Lower House with nobody to face Mr. Gladstone, if he had dreamed that he would resume his place as leader of the Liberals. Lord Beaconsfield, on Mr. Gladstone's coming to the front again, is reported to have uttered a groan, rivalling that famous one of Lord George Bentinck's, in the library of the House of Commons, when he spoke of Surplice's victory, and then to have said, in the irritated tone natural to a tactician who feels that he has been outwitted: "If I had thought he was only at his games, he would never have got rid of me like this." I by no means vouch for the accuracy of this anecdote, but it certainly passed current at the time in well-informed circles.

"Imperium et Libertas" made a great hit at the Guildhall Banquet in 1879, and is interesting also as having given rise to a discussion as to the identity of that "one of the greatest of the Romans" who thus declared his policy. It would seem that the precise quotation is not to be found anywhere. The wags insisted that it was by that famous author, Benvenuto—*in fact*, the product of the Roman imagination of the speaker himself; but examination has been rewarded by finding something like it by Cicero, and also by Tacitus.

Few men repeated themselves less than did Lord Beaconsfield; but he undeniably did so once. In Coningsby he wrote: "Light as air, and proud as a young peacock, tripped on his toes a young Tory who had contrived to keep his seat in a Parliament where he had done nothing, but who thought the Under-Secretaryship was now secure, particularly as he was the son of a noble lord who had also, in a public capacity, plundered and blundered in the good old time." In October, 1873, he addressed a letter to Lord Grey de Wilton respecting an election then pending at Bath. In the course of it he said: "For nearly five years the present ministers have harassed every trade, worried every profession, and assailed or menaced every class, institution, and species of property in the country." The

letter closed by saying: "The country has, I think, made up its mind to close this career of plundering and blundering." Mr. G. H. Jennings, in his *Anecdotal History of the English Parliament*, reminds his readers that this sentence was happily parodied by Mr. Gladstone in his Greenwich speech in the following January. Mr. Disraeli had gone astray about British interests in the Straits of Malacca. Mr. Gladstone replied that if any neglect had taken place it was under the foreign administration of Lord Derby in Mr. Disraeli's own Cabinet, and concluded by saying: "I will leave the leader of the Opposition for the present floundering and foundering in the Straits of Malacca."

At the beginning of the last decade Mr. Disraeli produced some noteworthy phrases, such as, "The Tory party, unless it is a national party, is nothing;" and the enunciation of the Tory creed that "the principles of liberty, of order, of law, and of religion ought not to be entrusted to individual opinion, or to the caprice and passion of multitudes, but should be embodied in a form of permanence and power." Whatever may be thought of these opinions, there can be no question as to the force and clearness with which they are enunciated. It was at this period that the well-known "Sanitas, sanitatum, omnia sanitas" was uttered, and denounced as "a policy of sewage."

A very telling hit was that made in the debate on the Address of 1872. The Liberal ministry had been unlucky with the loss of the ship *Megara*, the Alabama negotiations, and the Collier affair, and had been making vindictory harangues all over the country during the recess. Mr. Disraeli twitted the Government with giving nobody time to forget their shortcomings. "We really have had no time to forget anything. Her Majesty's ministers may be said during the last six months to have lived in a blaze of apology."

In the same year, he made, in a speech to the Lancashire Conservatives, one of his most quoted sayings, also one of those the originality of which has been as fiercely challenged as that of the French, "*Nous dansons sur un volcan*." Criticising the recent action of Mr. Gladstone's ministry, he said: "Extravagance was being substituted for energy by the Government. The unnatural stimulus was subsiding. Their paroxysms ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternated between a menace and a sigh.

As I sat opposite the Treasury bench, the Ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coast of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea."

There is in such a passage as this distinct evidence of careful preparation, as in most of Lord Beaconsfield's best similes. Ready and swift of mind in debate, quick to parry and riposte, his really good things, witty in idea, and perfect in expression, have evidently been "shaped," like Gibbon's, "with an edge severe."

It has already been remarked that he was not particular whence he took his arrow, whether from his own quiver or that of his adversary. A very humorous instance of this indifference occurred in 1868, when he, in American parlance, stole Mr. Bright's thunder to smite Mr. Lowe.

Everybody recollects Mr. Bright's comparison of Mr. Lowe and his followers to David and the bankrupts and so forth who went to the Cave Adullam—not "of" Adullam as frequently misquoted. Mr. Disraeli said: "The only objection which I have to the attacks of the noble lord (Cranborne) is, that they invariably produce an echo from the other side. When the bark is heard from this side, the right honourable member for Calne (Mr. Lowe) emerges, I will not say from his 'cave,' but perhaps from a more cynical habitation. He joins immediately in the chorus of reciprocal malignity, 'and hails with horrid melody the moon.'"

In his ordinary conversation, when he could be said to converse, Lord Beaconsfield was rather pleasing than witty. Sir William Harcourt should have a good store of his observations made during the Sunday walks they took together round Hughenden. It was on one of these occasions that the present Home Secretary remarked on the pride his host evidently took in his property and his improvements. "No passion is stronger," said Lord Beaconsfield, "than the pride of a proprietor—on Sunday afternoons."

Here is a remark showing deep knowledge of human, or at least proprietorial nature, as the "roast mutton and potatoes" story shows wonderful self-possession and shrewdness, but the distance is very great between these and the impromptus carefully made "at leisure."

## VISITED ON THE CHILDREN.

BY THEO GIFT.

### BOOK II.

#### CHAPTER XIX. IN THE TRACK OF THE SETTING SUN.

"I THINK it looks very like it," said Lady Ashleigh; "and if it had not been for the other— Ah dear, dear, that was a sad affair. Poor Sybil was always such a favourite of mine, so pretty and gentle, and—and easier to understand than Jenny."

"Much easier," said Mrs. Ashleigh promptly; "a mental calibre of the simplest order. I don't wonder at your preferring her to Jenny, Margaret; but all the same, now you have taken a fancy into that dear good head of yours, don't run about sowing it in others. I should be sorry for it to get wind here."

"But supposing it should be true?" suggested Lady Ashleigh rather timidly.

Good-tempered and easy as she was, she was always a little afraid of her sister-in-law. Rose said such sharp things, and, like Jenny Dysart, one could not always understand her. On the present occasion she knitted her brows and looked quite cross.

"If it should be true, I should have gained a real daughter instead of an adopted one: only in that case she would live away from instead of with me. As I am desperately dull, however, and should rather like to have a daughter in the house if I'm to have one at all, I don't want to suppose anything that would take her out of it."

"Oh no, of course not," said Lady Ashleigh quickly. "I am sure, however, that Jenny would have too much good feeling to——" And then, not being quite sure of what the good feeling was to deter Jenny from doing, or in what direction Mrs. Ashleigh's disapproval extended, she broke off her sentence, and occupied herself more assiduously in picking the dead leaves off a camellia.

It was a day just at the close of March, that "roaring moon of daffodil and crocus," and the two ladies were standing inside one of the greenhouses at Dilworth Hall. Lady Ashleigh wore her ordinary indoor dress, with only a white knitted shawl thrown over her head, and framing the pleasant, blooming freshness of her motherly face; but the rector's wife was dressed in her walking costume of dark



cloth bordered with fur, and, when she made her appearance at the Hall a few minutes earlier, she had told her sister-in-law that she was only waiting for her brougham, as she had promised to drive into Esher to see the Dysart girls and meet Lion, who, now the vicar of a Hampshire parish, was down on a few days' visit to his parents at Dilworth. The day before, he had gone up to town on business, and as he was to bring down with him an invalid's bed-rest that Mrs. Ashleigh had ordered for Sybil, it was arranged that he should get out of the train at Esher, and that his mother should drive over there and bring him back.

It was a glorious morning. As the two ladies came out of the greenhouse and strolled along the gravel walks, the strong pure breeze, fresh without being in the least chilly, caught Lady Ashleigh's knitted shawl and spread it out behind her like a cloud, as though to emulate those long, white, feathery ones chasing each other in swiftly flying ranks across the glittering blue above. All round, the thorns and lime-trees were beginning to be budded over with a tender outlining of green, while the almonds, rejoicing in their priority, burst out in great bunches of pale-pink bloom, showing delicately clear against the brown stone terraces and faded red brick of the old manor house, and contrasting with the dark leafless tracery of the stouter oaks and beeches. All the borders were alive with crocuses, yellow, purple, and white. Every bank was a bed of primroses, looking as if the pale gold sunshine, diffused over the lap of Nature, had slumbered there a moment and left the earth a-blooming for its impress; while down in the meadow, which a few weeks back was white with snowdrops, "the first-born flower of the year," there raged a sea of daffodils breaking their golden bloom against the swaying spears of their sea-green leafage, and "taking the winds of March with beauty."

All nature seemed dancing and singing in the uproarious joy of early springtime. The very lambs, brave to boldness at being born into such a merry, madcap world, tried not to shiver when the mischievous wind caught them and turned their woolly fleeces flat against their sides, but fell to butting each other and playing uncouth gambols, in which their widespread, clumsy little black legs seemed to jerk about quite irrespective of the rest of their bodies;

and in every sunny nook and grassy place

The daisies pied and violets blue,  
And lady-smocks all silver white,  
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,

dappled the green sward with delicate mosaics. Even the two matrons pacing the terrace walk—though on the autumn side of life themselves—showed in the calm and comely maturity of their stately womanhood no sign of the waning sadness of autumn's days, but bore themselves bravely, as women with good husbands and children, clear consciences and pleasant homes, have a right to do: Lady Ashleigh indeed, though the elder by some years, looking the sunnier of the two. The rector's wife had a tiny fold of anxiety on her brow, and she stopped once or twice to glance towards the gate.

"The carriage ought to have been here by now," she said. "I wonder how I shall find her to-day? Lovely as the weather is, there is a touch of east in the wind still; and I never go over there now without the fear lest something may have happened since I last heard."

"Poor child!" said kind Lady Ashleigh, sighing. "It's sad to think that such a young creature should be drifting out of life just when the world begins to look gay and springlike. I wish they were nearer to us; but Jenny says both the doctors declare she is too weak to bear moving, and that she is happier there than in places which would remind her more of her old life. Ah dear! how bright a one it seemed likely to be once! I hardly wonder, as things are now, at her being so content to go. Rose, I wish you had been driving over to-morrow instead of to-day; I could have sent some more of that clotted cream that she likes. I've not got any this morning."

"I should have done so, if it had not been for Lion's coming down to-day; and, though I don't see what Mr. Jacobson should be doing on the Esher line, I don't feel as if it were safe to trust my young man at any railway-station within a dozen miles of Epsom since he has become such a warlike character."

"Ah! I've often meant to ask you more about that," said Lady Ashleigh, turning round from picking a spray of yellow winter jasmine to add to the bouquet she was carrying, with a sudden air of interest. "Of course I heard about it at the time, for William wrote to me as well as you; but what with being so taken

up with Ada and her baby, and that smoky London air, which always confuses my head, I don't believe I have ever had a clear idea of the whole story. Lion thrashed this Mr. Jacobson, or knocked him down—which was it?—for telling lies about poor little Sybil; but how came he to hear of them, and what brought about the meeting? The man must have been a thorough-paced scamp, of course; but still it seemed a little—— Well, of course, Will would have done it in a moment; but then Lion being a clergyman—— However, I suppose he was too indignant to stop to think."

"Oh dear no, I don't think so," said Mrs. Ashleigh, the more lightly for a certain proud glistening in her eyes, of which she was a little ashamed. "The fact is, he was rather out of conceit with himself at the time, and wanted at bit of excitement to set him up again. He had been so terribly cock-a-hoop a little while before at his success in clearing up those slanders about Sybil and Mr. Vane, and in actually finding out, while doing so, all about that poor young aunt of the girls, who disappeared so mysteriously while they were still children in Austria, that he began to think his exertions all-powerful, and himself a sort of *deus ex machinâ*; and when he found out that no one wanted to hear his explanations, and that the very people who had bestirred themselves most busily in spreading falsehoods about our poor child were most indifferent to their refutation; while his very energy in defending her, damaged its own aim by strengthening a rumour which had got about, that he was as much in love with her as ever, and only fighting her battles for that reason, he got proportionately disappointed, accused himself of failing in everything, and would have liked, I'm afraid, to have sworn at the whole crew. I told him I had expected nothing else, that it was not his fault, and that once a girl had been talked about no counter-talking could ever undo the mischief done her, or leave her where she was before. But my lord was rather sore about it, and I suppose it was still rankling in his mind when he went into Leatherhead that day. I had asked him to call at the railway-station for a parcel, which my stupid bootmaker had addressed there by mistake, and he was waiting for the train to come in which was to bring it when he overheard this Matt Jacobson talking about Sybil. The man was lounging against the bookstall, in

company with a couple of horsey-looking friends, also apparently waiting for the train, and his back was turned to Lion; but he spoke so loud that his words were distinctly audible, and the boy heard him boasting of having helped to break off Gareth Vane's engagement to Miss Dysart, declaring that she was a fickle, worthless little jade, who had played his friend as false from the beginning as she had done her parson lover before him, and gone back to the latter as soon as the former's back was turned; and that he himself had caught the two spooning and sentimentalising in a country lane, while the young lady was supposed to be engaged to his friend; and he had written to Mr. Vane in consequence and told him of it. What he might have gone on to add, I don't know. Lion only held himself in long enough to hear that much, and then made but one stride forward, took hold of Jacobson by the back of his collar, saying:

"'Mr. Jacobson, you are a liar and a coward, and every word you have been uttering is an impudent falsehood,' and shook him till his teeth rattled in his head, flinging him off at the end as if he had been a dog. The man was so taken by surprise, and so helpless in our boy's grip—you know what a wrist he has—that he hardly made an effort to resist, and fell all in a heap on the platform when he was let go; but Lion turned round to the other two, and said as calmly as possible:

"'Gentlemen, I don't know if Mr. Jacobson is an intimate friend of yours. If so, I'm sorry to have had to handle him so roughly before you; but men who slander women in public places must expect to be publicly punished, and I tell you to his face that all that he has been saying of a fatherless and motherless girl now lying on a sick bed, and very near to death's-door, is a foul and gratuitous lie. I am the clergyman he alludes to, and I have never even once seen or spoken with Miss Dysart since the day of her engagement to his friend six months ago—an engagement to which I believe she is as true now as then. I say it to you on my word of honour as a gentleman; and I dare him to contradict me.'

"Mr. Jacobson faltered out:

"'Well, if I didn't see you together, my little girl did, and I heard——' But Lion cut him short by laughing in his face, and turned to the other two with:

"'There, gentlemen, you see his story is altering already! I leave you to believe

him or me, which you please;' and, lifting his hat, walked away and left them, Jacobson stammering curses after him while he brushed the dust off his clothes."

"I wonder, in such a small place, that the affair didn't make more fuss and scandal than it did," said Lady Ashleigh. The rector's wife nodded.

"So do I; but fortunately it wanted some minutes to the arrival of the train, and the only other witnesses of the scene were the old porter, Thompson (who used to be a servant of ours), and his son, who is the boy at the bookstall. Thompson came forward at once, pretending to think Mr. Jacobson's foot had slipped, and doing all that he could to make him keep quiet; but indeed we heard afterwards that the wretched man was so much mortified at the view his friends took of the matter, and so fearful that Mr. Vane might hear of it and take it up on his side, that though he blustered a good deal at first, he was more anxious than anybody to hush it up, and even paid the newspaper people not to put in a paragraph about it."

"I can't help being glad, for dear Lion's sake, that he did," said Lady Ashleigh.

"Lion didn't care one way or another," retorted his mother; "he said, if he had known he should be unfrocked for it, he should have done it all the same; and he went down to W—— and told the bishop about it himself."

"And I heard the bishop was very kind," put in the baronet's wife; "but then he knows us."

"And he knows Lionel too, which is more to the point. He listened to him quite quietly, and then said: 'My dear Mr. Ashleigh, this is very wrong, you know. To knock a man down is unchristian and illegal in anyone, but in a clergyman it is unseemly into the bargain. Now, don't be tempted to do it again, or, as your diocesan, I shall be obliged to reprimand you severely. In the present instance, as you have made this statement to me of your own accord, I shall receive it as sub sigillo confessionis, and reserve any further censure till I hear of it from other quarters.' Then he asked him to dine with him; and Lion came home next day and got a far worse lecture from his father. You know how much the rector thinks of 'respectability:' he positively insisted on taking Lion's duty for him next Sunday."

"Ah! John thought he was wrong too," said Lady Ashleigh; "but as for

Sir William, my dear, I think he was delighted. He vowed Lion was a chip of the old block, drank his health at dinner, and sent him a present of his own gold-headed hunting-whip to keep his hands clean another time. Lion is a great favourite with his uncle."

"And with his mother, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Ashleigh smiling. "However, I will own I was glad that poor old Mr. Brisbane's death occurred just then and gave him the move he had been waiting for. And now, as the carriage is waiting for me, and I don't want any more fighting to-day, I'll be off. Are those flowers for Sybil? Thanks. Dear me, I have talked myself quite hot!"

But there was no sign of heat or excitement in her manner when, later in the same afternoon, she entered the cottage bedroom where Sybil Dysart lay dying; the little room which, however humble, always looked so exquisitely neat and dainty, with its latticed casement and curtains of snowy dimity, the well-filled bookcase and bowls and baskets of fresh flowers set about everywhere, and the sweet girl-face lying back among its white pillows before which no raised tones or angry word were ever suffered to be heard. Jenny was seated beside the bed reading aloud when Mrs. Ashleigh came in, and rose gladly to welcome her; but the only greeting which passed between these two was a kiss, and a mute question and shake of the head, which said as plainly as words: "Any change?" "None."

Sybil's face, however, grew beaming, and she put up her lips to be kissed, saying, with the prettiest little petulant accent: "Jenny, the 'person of the house' ought to be spoken to first! Dear Mrs. Ashleigh, how good it is to see you! Do you know I have been feeling so much better to-day, and the sunshine has been so lovely. I was half wishing you would come over."

"And I have been wishing to come here before, dear child; but you know how troublesome the rector's bronchial tubes are in an east wind. I daren't leave him. How are you, however? Really better?"

"To-day, yes, ever so much. One can feel the sunshine even in bed; and besides, when Jenny lifted me up I could see it glittering on the common, and all the gorse breaking into bloom, and the cloud shadows chasing each other about till I almost wished I could be out in the lanes primrose gathering. Are there very many this year, Mrs. Ashleigh?"



"More than ever, I think, my dear; the banks were yellow with them as I came along."

"Then mightn't Jenny go out for a run and gather some while you are here? She is looking so pale—yes, Jenny, you are—and she hasn't been out for a whole week. Do make her go."

"That is just what I was meaning to do," said Mrs. Ashleigh, smiling, "for I noticed those pale cheeks directly I came in. Put on your hat at once, Jenny, and get a good race in the breeze. Nonsense, child! Do you think I came to talk to you, or that I can't take care of your sister just as well as you can? She will be quite glad of a change, won't you, Sybil?"

But though Jenny laughed and said she didn't doubt that, she still lingered, and even after she had her hat on, came back and hung over Sybil, smoothing and arranging her pillows for her till Mrs. Ashleigh said quietly:

"By-the-way, Jenny, if you take the path across the common to the station you will most likely meet another friend coming here. Lion has been staying with me for the last few days, and went up to London yesterday; but he is to come back by the five-o'clock train, and we arranged to meet here and go home together."

Jenny lifted her face quickly enough, and with such a sudden glow and sparkle lighting up its pallor, such a flash of utter surprise and gladness as did not need Mrs. Ashleigh's keen glance to discover; but there was no embarrassment or confusion in it, and she kept it fully turned on her friend as she said, in the frankest tone of pleasure:

"Lion! That is nice. Why, it is three months since I saw him—not since he became a vicar. Mrs. Ashleigh, how does he really like it? How is he looking? Oh, but I shall see that for myself. Of course I will go that way; it will be pleasant to have a talk with Lion again."

The two left alone did not talk much. Mrs. Ashleigh took up a piece of Jenny's work which was lying on the table, and began to sew at it, pausing now and then to stroke the invalid's hair, or tell her some little anecdote about the village people in her old home; and Sybil lay looking at her and sometimes smiling, sometimes answering a word or two, but evidently too weak for much exertion, and tired already by the little she had made.

She was dying fast, as anyone could see who looked at her. Swiftly and gently as

the first Amy Dysart had gone, gliding down the steep incline to the river of death; peaceful and happy too, like that first Amy in her ending, though unlike her in having lost the one she loved best, and therefore more content to leave a world in which he no longer existed for her. In truth, since she had known Gareth was married, and that his apparently wanton desertion of her had been caused, not by mere heartless fickleness, but by the falsehoods of a person who had persuaded him that she was untrue to him, Sybil's grief had been healed of half its bitterness; and those who watched her noticed with thankfulness how by degrees her blue eyes lost that look of hopeless questioning, her mouth that painful tension which had altered its placid sweetness so pitifully before. Heart and brain might cease wearying at last as to the meaning of that cruel letter. He had been deceived, that was all; not recklessly wicked. Perhaps he had even loved her a little all the time, and—he was happy! What could she ask more, when, even had she had him by her side, there was hardly enough life left in her to bid him farewell? To-day, after a longer pause than usual, she startled Mrs. Ashleigh by saying:

"When I am gone you will take Jenny away at once, will you not?"

"My dear child, yes. You know it. Haven't I told you that she shall be as my own child—the daughter I have always wanted? We could not have a dearer one."

"I know it, and I am so glad. Dear old Jenny! she will be very happy with you; and she deserves to be happy, for her life has been such a dull, sad one of late, and she is so brave always, so good and cheerful and unselfish. I am only afraid—— What are you looking at?"

"At them—Lion and Jenny; here they come. Stay, let me raise you, dear; do you want to see them too?"

The bed was near the window, and from her seat by the former Mrs. Ashleigh could see the broad expanse of Esher Common, russet green, and crossed at present by level stripes of gold where the setting sun had swept it with its fiery ploughshare. There were geese feeding about, and the mellow rays had touched with red their white plumage, and flushed to flame all the little pools of rain-water which laughed and sparkled in the ruffling wind, while right across the level turf in the track of one of those golden sunrays there were coming two figures, Lionel and Jenny: he, broad-shouldered and strong-looking, carrying

on his shoulder some awkward-looking machine ("just like a navvy," his mother muttered to herself, "and with the matter-of-fact ease of one"); she, tall and slim (alas! the past year of nursing and watching had not improved Jenny's appearance—she still showed no signs of "filling out," as Lord Dysart put it), walking at his side with a brisk, elastic step, her face turned up to his; happy both of them in each other's company. Sybil, propped on Mrs. Ashleigh's arm, and watching them with wistful, glistening eyes, felt a sudden thrill at her heart. What if Jenny should have found the prize which she had thrown away, and yet, through her fault, be debarred from enjoying it? The hectic in her cheek deepened at the thought.

"Do you know," she said, her voice trembling in spite of herself as she pointed with her little wasted hand at the two, "what I was thinking of when I said that I was afraid of something? Oh, Mrs. Ashley, look there! Can't you guess?"

The rector's wife smiled.

"Yes, Sybil, I think I can," she said quietly. "I have seen it coming for some time. But, my child, why do you say 'afraid'? Would it pain you if it were so?"

"Pain me! Oh, how can you ask? But I feared you would not like it: that you would think of me, and remember how I had treated him, and——"

"My dear Sybil, I thought we had agreed never to speak of that again."

"Only this once, for Jenny's sake. Mrs. Ashleigh, you don't know how good and faithful she is—how different to me. When she loves once she will never change, and I think she has always loved him. He has always been her hero since she was a baby, and though she does not even think of it in that way—she is too innocent, and thinks too little of herself—if he were to care for her——"

"As I believe he has begun to do without knowing it. My dear Sybil, why are you crying? What are you frightened at? Do you know what I was telling Lady Ashleigh just before I came out? If it were so, I should gain a real daughter instead of an adopted one, and I shall love her just the same in either case. Child, Jenny is quite safe with me."

She had laid her hand soothingly on Sybil's cheek, and Sybil drew it down to her lips and kissed it.

"Lay me down again," she said faintly. "I am quite happy now. Oh, Mrs. Ashleigh, I think you are the best woman in the world!"

Jenny came in with a quick, soft step a moment later, and a face quite rosy from her walk, and looked alarmed at the sight of tears in her sister's eyes; but Sybil only laughed and dashed them away with a wilful hand. It was the sun dazzling her, nothing more; but she would not have it shut out, she liked it, and she was quite well—quite well and happy. Wouldn't Jenny take Mrs. Ashleigh away and give her and Lion some tea? She was sure it was ready, for she had smelt Mrs. Mather-son's tea-cake cooking for some time. It was such good cake, too, it oughtn't to be let spoil; and then, just as they were leaving the room, she called Jenny back, and put up her face to be kissed, bidding her "mind and take care of Lion and give him everything he wanted."

But when she was left alone the smiles in her eyes gave place to a wistful sadness, very pitiful in one so young. She could hear their cheerful voices below, Lion's deep tones, and Jenny's laugh, sweeter now for being so rare. It was pleasant to hear them, pleasant to know that her one anxiety had been removed, and that when she was gone there might still be happiness for the sister so dear to her. He, too, was happy and rich. It was best as it was: far, far better than the old dream could ever have been; and he had loved her—once! Very slowly and feebly her fingers searched under the pillow till they found a tiny pocket-book, and drew from it the last letter but one he had ever written her. That cruel final one she had burnt long ago; but this was different. She could read this and feel that he had loved her while he was writing it. To-day, however, the golden sunshine in her eyes dazzled her, and the words seemed to swim in it. She could just make out the first ones: "My darling little white lily," all the rest was a golden mist; and, too weak for further effort, she turned her cheek round and tried to kiss the words she could not see.

So they found her when they came into the room ten minutes later, lying in the sunshine with the letter pressed to her lips, only there was no breath in the latter. She was dead!

*The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.*